
The Bottom Line: Managing Library Finances

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(people.morrisville.edu/~drewwe/wireless/index.htm) even includes a listing of US and international libraries that have set up wireless networks.

Wireless networking is a steadily emerging technology that libraries have begun to utilize. It offers some real advantages as a supplement to the library's wired Internet infrastructure, and is worth considering for your institution.

Comments on this column are welcome and can be sent to maxymuk@crab.rutgers.edu, or visit my Web page (www.rci.rutgers.edu/~maxymuk/home/home.html).

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If you want my 2¢ worth

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TBL interviews Sandy Berman. Berman is most recently the former Head Cataloger of Hennepin County Library, Minnetonka, Minnesota, USA.

TBL: What do you consider your greatest achievement?

Berman: Rescuing the full run of *I.F. Stone's Weekly* from the dumpster in 1968. That's where the hugely influential muckraking newsletter was destined, a victim of reckless weeding by my boss at the UCLA Research Library. More broadly, my professional mission – and perhaps career achievement – has been rescue, or liberation. Maudlin as it may sound, I actually felt almost every day, as a cataloger, that I was liberating library books and audiovisual materials, as well as the information and ideas they contained, by crafting bibliographic records that included clarifying (and searchable) notes, generous topical and other access points (among them tracings for illustrators, translators, eminent

Forward and Preface contributors, permuted and sub-titles, and small, regional, and specialty presses), no arcane or intimidating abbreviations, and subject headings formulated in both familiar and unbiased language, and representing contemporary themes and events in a timely way. This constructively critical cataloging approach also involved correcting and expanding “outside copy” – typically Library of Congress (LC) records – in order to repair classification and subject analysis mistakes, together with frequent “under-cataloging”. That activity, largely conducted at Hennepin County Library in Minnesota, directly triggered the reform or creation of hundreds of LC subject headings, promoted more extensive note-making as general practice, and by precedent and advocacy encouraged full and equitable cataloging treatment for all formats and genres, most notably audiovisual, fiction, and juvenilia. In tandem with enhancing bibliographic access to library materials, I've sought to prod libraries to more truly observe the Library Bill of Rights by stocking and publicizing a wider range of publications, videos, and CDs that reflect the real diversity of political and social opinion and cultural expression, especially the alternative voices and movements minimized or ignored in mainstream, money-driven media. So, I regard that effort as an achievement, together with trying to humanize and expand library services beyond a strictly middle- and upper-class clientele. To that end, I co-authored the American Library Association's (ALA) library policy for poor people (www.ala.org/Content/NavigationMenu/Our_Association/Governance/Policy_Manual/Services_to_the_Poor.htm) and founded the Social Responsibilities Round Table Task Force on Hunger, Homelessness, and Poverty. Incidentally, if librarians want to patriotically join the current War on Terrorism, they can hardly do better than implement the 15 objectives stated in the Poor People's Policy, since terror is a daily reality for the millions of Americans who don't have enough to eat, don't have permanent shelter, and don't have health insurance.

TBL: Who are your heroes in real life?

Berman: I'm not sure that having heroes is a good idea. Not if it leads to mindless adulation, worship, or feeling insignificant and powerless when comparing yourself to the hero. And, too many widely-certified heroes turn out to be disappointingly flawed: Washington an Indian-killer, Jefferson a slaveholder and elitist, Theodore Roosevelt a racist and imperialist, Woodrow Wilson a bigot and autocrat, Mother Teresa a friend of oppressors, Martin Luther a vicious anti-Semite, and Richard the Lionheart a murderous brute. What I prefer is to admire individuals and groups – many of whose names I don't even know – who did the right thing. People who behaved in a decent and principled fashion at great personal risk even though they didn't have to: for instance, the Southwestern Governor who publicly opposed the Japanese-American internment, the Cavalry officer who denounced the Sand Creek Massacre, the countless Danes who organized the transport of their Jewish compatriots to safety in Sweden, the American helicopter captain who turned his guns on Lieutenant Calley's troops to halt the My Lai Massacre and the handful of grunts who refused to shoot civilians there, and Illinois Governors Altgeld and Ryan for pardoning the remaining Haymarket convicts and latter-day victims of police excess and public vengeance. Right now I much admire three South Asian women – Arundhati Roy, Vandana Shiva, and Taslima Nasrin – who remain outspoken and eloquent advocates for social, economic, and environmental justice, despite appalling threats and persecution. Also, last year met an unassuming Israeli teenager, Haggai Matar, who now languishes in a military prison because he refused to be inducted into the army, which he believes is primarily devoted to oppressing Palestinians in the Occupied Territories. Some 200 high school students have joined him in his resistance to the Occupation, while more than 700 active-duty soldiers and reservists likewise have refused to serve in the West Bank and Gaza. These conscientious "refuseniks" I deeply admire.

TBL: What do you think of corporate sponsorships? While they bring significant funds to libraries, do they threaten the library's neutrality?

Berman: Such sponsorships or donations involve three perils. The first is that the influx of non-tax money to support library services can boomerang against the library itself, persuading governing boards and commissions that they can safely freeze or even reduce the level of public funding. Second, the extent that corporate names and logos appearing on library walls and literature – the place that should be one of the last refuges from otherwise pervasive hype and huckstering – may become simply another commercial space, no longer an ad-free sanctuary, and no longer neutral. Rather than even-handedly offering a broad range of opinion and belief, the library may morph into a partisan exponent of purely commercial values and business culture. Such a transformation would undercut its credibility and appeal for large segments of the population. Likewise, it would violate the profession's longstanding commitment to intellectual freedom and neutrality.

Finally, there's a danger of dependency and hidden costs. What seems like no-strings-attached largesse – for instance, a Gates Grant – can easily become a budget-inflating nightmare, perhaps incurring endless maintenance, replacement, and training costs not covered by the initial donation. As such, the gift, especially in the form of computer terminals, may lock the unlucky recipient into total reliance on strictly one variety of equipment and software, to the donor's continuing profit. The bottom line here is that public institutions should ideally be financed with tax dollars. Everybody benefits. Everybody should pay. And it's the only way to truly maintain a library's independence, integrity, and flexibility.

TBL: What do you perceive to be the most compelling financial concern facing libraries in the next five years?

Berman: Adequate funding. Library boards and managers need to be much more aggressive in convincing public funders that libraries deliver an essential, democracy-supporting service that

most people appreciate, and that library outlays usually represent a relatively small percentage of total city or county budgets. Further, library leaders and friends – while avoiding the perils of soft, impermanent, and often problematic grants and gifts from private sources – ought to explore and promote ways to expand public revenue. Among other things, this could lead to the establishment of special library taxing districts and the generation of greater intake through eliminating corporate welfare and instituting non-regressive sales taxes plus higher rates on higher incomes. The money's there. What's too often missing is the political will and guts to retrieve it for unarguably good causes – like libraries and homeless shelters.

TBL: If money were no object, what is the most significant change that you would institute in your library?

Berman: It's probably unintentional, but this question – particularly the way it's phrased – illustrates a grave and persistent problem in library administration. What it represents is an unfortunate top-down approach toward management and policy making. A significant change should best result from widespread discussion among stakeholders, most notably employees and users. This might be variously achieved by means of staff convocations, community meetings, surveys, focus groups, and conversations within labor-management committees. Decision-by-fiat – that is, policy made by a single boss or handful of managers – will not only alienate, and perhaps embitter, staff and public, but will also suffer from the absence of their insight and expertise. Democracy is a good idea just about anywhere, including the workplace. (Indeed, staff should be guaranteed the right to express their views on professional and policy matters without fear or reprisal. Such a free speech clause can be added to labor contracts, personnel manuals, and the Library Bill of Rights.)

TBL: If your budget were decreased by 10 per cent, what would your response be?

Berman: First: fight-like-hell against the cut, seeking community, press, and staff support to maintain service levels. Second: if opposition proved fruitless, consult – as suggested earlier

– with all the principal stakeholders concerning how best to absorb the reduction.

TBL: What is the most significant cost savings measure you have implemented in the course of your career?

Berman: Enhancing bibliographic and physical access to library resources, thereby capitalizing on – rather than wasting – the considerable investment in buying and processing them in the first place. Unfindable, and consequently underused, materials hardly qualify as sound fiscal management.

TBL: What do you think are the best ways to help insure free and equal access to information for library users?

Berman: Seriously and systematically implementing the ALA policies (www.ala.org/Content/NavigationMenu/Our_Association/Governance/Policy_Manual/Policy_Manual.htm) on services to disabled persons (54.3.2), minorities (60), and poor people (61). Paramount among necessary, access-expanding reforms would be the elimination of fines and fees, which unquestionable discriminate against low-income users. Furthermore, rental charges for specific formats, like videos or DVDs, constitute an unjustifiable, often printist favoritism, undercutting what should be an equitable treatment of all genres and formats. Additionally, to ensure that otherwise voiceless constituents have a chance to critique and improve service, advisory boards should be convened at least once or twice yearly. ALA's Poor People's Policy contains the admonition to promote "direct representation of poor people and antipoverty advocates through appointment to local boards and creation of local advisory committees on service to low-income people, such appointments to include library-paid transportation and stipends". That model could easily be extended to embrace teens, seniors, ethnic groups, and people with disabilities.

Although not mentioned in the ALA policy, service to homeless citizens can be enormously improved through the simple expedient of allowing them to use the library address, or that of a shelter, to get borrower cards.

TBL: What are the most important skills that new librarians need to succeed in the twenty-first century?

Berman: The same skills and traits that effective librarians have always needed, ranging from curiosity and compassion to enthusiasm and critical thinking. It would also be nice to enter the profession with a commitment to diversity, equality, openness, candor, and collegiality. Patience and fortitude wouldn't hurt, either. Nor would a wicked sense of humor and visceral revulsion against any kind of censorship.

TBL: Are library schools doing enough to prepare librarians to be sound financial managers?

Berman: Probably, but the question itself betrays a flawed premise and intrinsic bias. The untenable assumption is that all library school graduates will either immediately or eventually become administrators and supervisors. While true for some, it doesn't hold for everyone. Many graduates, in fact, will fill non-supervisory professional slots or, at most, perform low-level supervision. The curricula largely fail these students in not preparing them to be underlings and subordinates. Course content is unthinkingly, reflexively crafted from the managerial perspective. It is Boss Education, not Worker Ed. What's desperately needed is serious attention to employee rights, unionizing, and alternatives to traditional hierarchical structures and closed-door decision-making. While on the Library and Information Science rant, my impression is that library education inadequately addresses several other issues that ought to be of primary concern to the profession: for instance, the politics and impact of public communication policy (like FCC rule-making); the rampaging consolidation of media industries, with profound effects on what gets seen, heard, and read; the continued vitality and importance of alternative media and their role in libraries; and the necessity for our institutions to genuinely underpin democracy and facilitate informed citizen-choices by proactively highlighting and examining public issues – e.g. tax policy, corporate greed, hunger and homelessness, bigotry, war and peace – through

webliographies, booklists, pathfinders, displays, and programs.

TBL: Which authors or books would you recommend on management?

Berman: Having mentioned more assertive funding and taxing, a highly informative and practical newsletter is *Too Much: A Quarterly Commentary on Capping Excessive Income and Wealth* (PO Box 337, Croton-on Hudson, NY 10520; 1-800-316-2739; \$15 yearly). The Winter 2003 issue, for example, features comparative data on upper-income tax rates in 1943, 2001, and projected 2010, as well as material on the campaign spearheaded by Bill Gates, Sr to tax concentrated wealth. A recent and prime text for enlightened managers and everyone else: Jeff Schmidt's *Disciplined Minds: A Critical Look at Salaried Professionals and the Soul-Battering System That Shapes Their Lives* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2000). Besides revealing the pronounced politics and values of supposedly balanced and objective professions, Schmidt furnishes useful analyses of authoritarian and totalist work situations, makes a devastating critique of hierarchy (pp. 271-3), and recommends a panoply of tactics to resist indoctrination, survive professional training without losing personal integrity, and promote greater workplace democracy and equality. Required reading for self-defense.

TBL: If you had the opportunity to do it all over again, would you still choose a career in this profession? Why or why not?

Berman: Well, the unvarnished truth is that librarianship wasn't my first career choice. I thought I wanted to be a foreign service officer, maybe graduating to ambassador, traveling widely and spreading the American gospel. That aim ended when, after returning to the States from Germany where I'd been an Army draftee for two years, I failed the foreign service oral exam, plunged into correspondence school piecemeal labor, and finally enrolled in the District of Columbia Public Library's work-study program (i.e. work full time, study whenever you can). I'm convinced that chance governs much of the universe, and chance surely directed my career path, which I don't

regret. Not at all. In fact, I later observed foreign service personnel in action overseas, especially Europe and Africa, thankfully concluding that I hadn't become one of them: essentially soldiers in suits. What frankly propelled me toward DCPL's program was the experience of working as a messenger clerk (page) for about three years at the Los Angeles Public Library branch. That's where I doubtless got the bug, even though my first-ever task was to mop up kid pee near the fairy tale shelves. Is there anything more satisfying than making it possible for people – irrespective of class or appearance or age – to learn, to laugh, to reflect, and to relax in their own public space and without being exhorted to do this or buy that?

Fundraising

*Edited by Gwendolen Rochester Leighty,
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Building your library major gift prospect portfolio

Keywords Gifts, Fund-raising, Libraries

As previous authors have stated in this column, libraries have become major players in fund-raising around the country. At the same time, other non-profits around the country are competing for the same dollars and donors. In an atmosphere where competition, even within your own organization, is heightened, how do libraries find major gift prospects – those individuals who have the capacity and the inclination to invest gifts of \$10,000 and above into your program?

Perhaps even more important, once you've identified those individuals, how do you get in the door and captivate their attention? In a culture where development programs are becoming more sophisticated, it is increasingly necessary to think outside the box when it comes to library fund-raising.

Challenges

Library fund-raising programs share many of the same challenges and identifying and

overcoming these challenges takes time and patience. First, many libraries are just beginning fund-raising programs. Academic libraries have traditionally counted on university support as well as state and federal monies to support their initiatives and many are just now feeling the need to develop a comprehensive fund-raising program.

Those libraries that do have a history of fund-raising have concentrated primarily on annual gifts to sustain their program and are now asking how to turn those annual givers into major givers.

The phrase heard continuously around academic libraries is, "we don't have a natural constituency". The academic schools have alumni and the sports programs have former athletes. While, hopefully, all alumni and former athletes have used the library, how do we capture those that have an affinity to libraries?

Finally, in many situations, the library is viewed as a competitor for funds. At academic institutions, the library competes with other schools within the institution for funding from alumni, friends, corporations and foundations. Often, the library is only allowed a secondary approach after an initial ask is declined.

Collaborative approaches

There are many ways to work collaboratively with your counter-parts in academic schools. Working hand-in-hand with your colleagues will advance mutual fund-raising goals. Consider the following tactics as you fine-tune your fund-raising program.

Presentation to colleagues

Invite development staff from throughout the university to your library. Show them how the resources you offer can help them in their fund-raising efforts. From researching prospects through your on-line databases, obtaining copies of thesis to share with their prospects, finding relevant historical material from old university photographs, newspapers and yearbooks to family genealogical information – all of this can be found in your library. And all of these materials make ideal cultivation tools in moving a prospect toward closure.

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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The Bottom Line: Managing Library Finances aims to provide librarians, library trustees, and others concerned with library management, with current information related to the financial aspects of library operations.

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